Population, Family, and Neighborhood

PF 2.1   Percentage of Families with Children and Distribution of Families by Number of Children

Since 1960, Americans have been moving toward having families with fewer children. Indeed, a growing percentage of families have no minor children of their own in their household. Between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of families with four or more of their own children under age 18 in the household decreased from 9 percent to 3 percent, where it has remained (see Figure PF 2.1). During the same period, the proportion of families with no minor children grew from 43 percent to 51 percent.

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin. These general trends are also evident when white, black, and Hispanic families are considered separately, though the levels are substantially different for each group (see Table PF 2.1). For example, between 1970 and 1999 the percentage of black families with four or more children dropped from 19 percent to 4 percent. The percentage for whites during that period went from 9 percent to 3 percent. For Hispanic families, the percentage dropped from 10 percent to 6 percent between 1980 (the first year for which Hispanic estimates are available) and 1999.

In 1999, black and Hispanic families were considerably less likely than white families to be without any minor children, with proportions of 44 percent and 37 percent respectively, compared to 53 percent for whites. They were also more likely than white families to have four or more children, though these differences were smaller than in previous decades.

Figure PF 2.1

Percentage of families in the United States with no children, and with four or more resident children: Selected years, 1960-1999
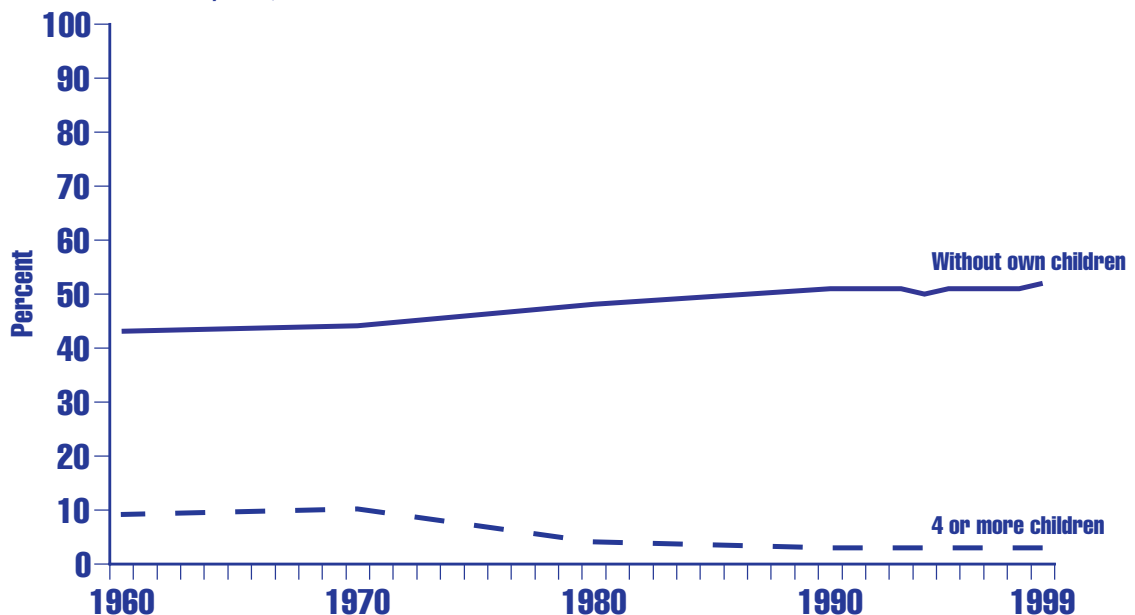
Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Households and Family Characteristics: 1998, no. 515; also previous issues of this annual report (Series P-20, no. 509, no. 495, no. 488, no. 483, no. 477, no. 467, no. 458, no. 447, and no. 366, Table 1 in each; no. 218, Table 5; and no. 106, Table 7).

Table PF 2.1

Percentage distribution of families in the United States by number of own children under age 18 and by race and Hispanic origin:[a] Selected years, 1960-1999

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
All families													
Without own children	43	44	48	51	51	51	51	50	51	51	51	51	52
One child	19	18	21	21	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
2 children	18	17	19	19	19	18	19	19	19	19	19	19	18
3 children	11	11	8	7	7	7	7	8	7	7	7	8	7
4 or more children	9	10	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
White[a] families													
Without own children	43	45	49	51	53	53	53	52	52	52	52	52	53
One child	19	18	21	21	19	20	19	19	20	19	20	20	19
2 children	18	18	19	19	18	18	19	19	19	19	19	18	18
3 children	11	11	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
4 or more children	9	9	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3
Black[a] families													
Without own children	—	39	38	41	41	42	42	40	42	43	42	42	44
One child	—	18	23	25	25	24	25	25	24	24	24	23	24
2 children	—	15	20	19	19	19	18	20	20	18	20	21	19
3 children	—	10	10	9	9	10	10	9	9	9	9	9	9
4 or more children	—	19	8	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
Hispanic[a] families													
Without own children	—	—	31	37	36	36	37	36	36	36	35	36	37
One child	—	—	23	23	22	22	23	22	23	23	24	23	23
2 children	—	—	23	21	23	22	22	23	23	23	23	23	22
3 children	—	—	13	12	12	13	12	13	12	12	12	12	12
4 or more children	—	—	10	7	7	7	7	6	7	7	6	6	6

[a] Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Estimates for whites and blacks include persons of Hispanic origin.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Current Population Reports,* Series P-20.

PF 2.2   Percentage Distribution of Children by Number of Parents in Household

Family structure is one of many factors that contributes to child well-being. It is also associated with the well-being of the child as an adult. For example, children from disrupted families or families where the parents never married are somewhat more likely to use alcohol and drugs, to become teen parents, and are less likely to earn a high school diploma than children from intact families. These associations are evident even after controlling for family socioeconomic status, race, and other background factors.[4] Nevertheless, the great majority of children brought up in single-parent families do well. In particular, differences in well-being between children from divorced and those from intact families tend, on average, to be moderate to small.[5]

Between 1970 and 1999, the proportion of children in two-parent families (about 84 percent of whom live with both biological parents)[6] decreased from 85 percent to 68 percent (see Table PF 2.2.A).

In 1999, 23 percent of children lived with their mother only; 4 percent lived with their father only;[7] and 4 percent lived with neither parent (see Table PF 2.2.A).[8] Of those who lived with neither parent, more than one-half were residing with one or more grandparents as of 1993 (see Table PF 2.2.B).

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin. The decrease in the proportion of children living in two-parent families is evident for black, white, and Hispanic children, though the decline is somewhat steeper for black children (see Figure PF 2.2.A). Between 1970 and 1996, the proportion of black children living in two-parent families fell by 25 percentage points from 58 percent to 33 percent (see Table PF 2.2.A). However, between 1996 and 1999, that percentage increased modestly to 35 percent. Between 1970 and 1999, the drop for white children was 16 percentage points, from 90 percent to 74 percent. For Hispanic children, the percentage living in two-parent families decreased from 78 percent to 63 percent.

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[4] Amato, P.R. 1993. Children's Adjustment to Divorce: Theories, Hypotheses, and Empirical Support. *Journal of Marriage and the Family,* 55: 23-58.

[5] Zill, N., Morrison, D., & Coiro, M. 1993. Long-Term Effects of Parental Divorce on Parent-Child Relationships: Adjustment and Achievement in Early Adulthood. *Journal of Family Psychology 7* (1): 91-103.

[6] Analyses by Child Trends of the 1993 Survey of Income and Program Participation indicates that 84 percent of children in married-couple families live with both biological parents (see Table PF 2.2.B).

[7] The Current Population Survey overestimates the proportion of children living in father-only families, because it identifies many cohabiting biological-parent couples as father-only. Though the precise size of the overestimate is not known, analyses of the 1993 Survey of Income and Program Participation indicate that a little over 2 percent of all children actually lived in father-only families in that year (see Table PF 2.2.B).

[8] Data from the 1996 Current Population Survey (not shown) indicate that 11 percent of all children under age 18 who are living in families live with single parents who are divorced. See Saluter, A. 1997. PPL-66, *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1996 (Update)*, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table PF 2.2.A

Percentage distribution of living arrangements of children under age 18 in the United States, by race and Hispanic origin:[a] Selected years, 1970-1999

	1970	1980	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994[b]	1995[b]	1996[b]	1997[b]	1998[b]	1999[b]
Total												
Two parents	85	77	73	72	71	71	69	69	68	68	68	68
Mother only	11	18	22	22	23	23	23	23	24	24	23	23
Father only	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
No parent	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
White[a]												
Two parents	90	83	79	78	77	77	76	76	75	75	74	74
Mother only	8	14	16	17	18	17	18	18	18	18	18	18
Father only	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	4
No parent	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Black[a]												
Two parents	58	42	38	36	36	36	33	33	33	35	36	35
Mother only	30	44	51	54	54	54	53	52	53	52	51	52
Father only	2	2	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	5	4	4
No parent	10	12	8	7	7	7	10	11	9	8	9	10
Hispanic[a]												
Two parents	78	75	67	66	65	65	63	63	62	64	64	63
Mother only	—	20	27	27	28	28	28	28	29	27	27	27
Father only	—	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5
No parent	—	3	3	4	3	4	5	4	5	5	5	5

[a] Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Estimates for whites and blacks include persons of Hispanic origin.

[b] Numbers in these years may reflect changes in the Current Population Survey because of newly instituted computer-assisted interviewing techniques and/or because of the change in the population controls to the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustments.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, no. 410, no. 461, no. 468, no. 478, no. 491, no. 496u, no. 506u, no. 514u (Table 4 in each); and no. 484, Table A-5; also unpublished data, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table PF 2.2.B

Percentage distribution of children under age 18 in the United States in two-parent, one-parent, or no-parent families, by age, race and Hispanic origin, poverty status, and parent's education level: 1993

|	Two-Parent Families			Single-Parent Families			No Parents Present	
	Total[a]	Biological Parents	One Biological, One Step-parent	Total[a]	Biological Mother	Biological Father	Total[a]	Grandparents
All children	70.8	59.8	7.1	26.5	22.6	2.1	2.4	1.5
Ages 0-5	72.8	67.4	1.8	25.4	22.5	1.2	1.8	1.3
Ages 6-11	70.8	58.9	7.9	26.7	22.8	1.9	2.4	1.8
Ages 12-17	68.8	52.3	12.2	27.5	22.4	3.2	3.2	1.6
Race and Hispanic origin[b]								
White, non-Hispanic	80.1	67.8	8.2	18.4	15.2	2.2	1.4	0.9
Black, non-Hispanic	35.9	28.2	4.4	56.9	48.9	2.2	7.1	4.7
Hispanic	61.5	52.9	5.6	35.3	32.6	1.4	2.7	1.6
Poverty status								
Below poverty	37.1	31.1	3.5	58.4	52.4	1.9	4.2	2.5
At or above poverty	80.6	68.2	8.2	17.2	13.9	2.1	1.9	1.2
Parent's education level[b]								
Less than high school	45.2	38.7	4.3	54.8	47.3	2.6	—	—
Completed high school	67.8	55.8	8.1	32.2	27.2	2.8	—	—
At least some college	76.5	63.1	9.4	23.5	20.3	1.9	—	—
Four or more years of college	90.3	79.1	6.2	9.7	7.8	—	—	—

[a] Totals for two-parent, one-parent, and no-parent families include categories beyond those presented separately.

[b] Education level in two-parent families is determined by the higher educated parent.

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993. Analysis by Child Trends.

Figure PF 2.2

Percentage of children under age 18 in the United States who are living with two parents, by race and Hispanic origin:[a] 1970-1999[b]
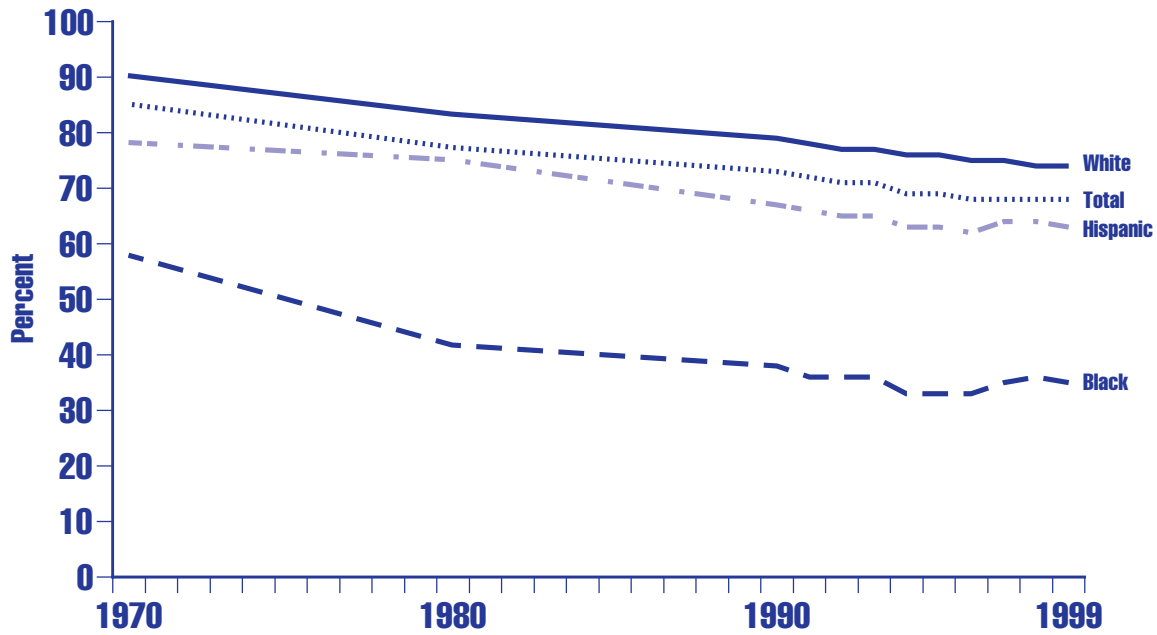
[a] Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Estimates for whites and blacks include persons of Hispanic origin.

[b] Numbers in the years 1994 and beyond may reflect changes in the Current Population Survey because of newly constituted computer-assisted interviewing techniques and/or because of the change in the population controls to the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustments.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, no. 410, no. 461, no. 468, no. 478, no. 491, no. 496u, no. 506u, no. 514u (Table 4 in each); and no. 484, Table A-5; also unpublished data, U.S. Bureau of the Census. As published in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 1998*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Table POP5.

PF 2.3   Children Living in Foster Care[9]

A child is placed in foster care when a court determines that his or her family cannot provide a minimally safe environment. This determination often follows an investigation by a state or county child protective services worker. Placement most commonly occurs either because a member of a household has physically or sexually abused a child or because a child's caretaker(s) has severely neglected the child. In some cases, children with severe emotional disturbances may also be put into foster care.

Since both federal and state laws discourage removal of children from their families unless necessary to ensure a child's safety, placement in foster care is an extreme step taken only when a child is in immediate danger or when attempts to help the family provide a safe environment have failed; thus, the frequency of placements in foster care is an indicator of family dysfunction that is so severe that a child cannot remain safely with his or her family.

The number of children in foster care rose sharply from 262,000 in 1982 to 560,000 in 1998 (see Table PF 2.3). As shown in Figure PF 2.3, the rate of children living in foster care (i.e., the number of children in foster care per 1,000 children under age 18) also rose dramatically during the same time period, from 4.2 per 1,000 children under age 18 in 1982 to 8.0 per 1,000 in 1998.

Table PF 2.3

Number and rate (per 1,000) of children in the United States living in foster care: 1982-1998

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996[a]	1997	1998
Total number (in thousands)	262	269	276	276	280	300	340	383	400	414	427	445	468	483	507	537	560
Rate	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.8	5.4	6.0	6.2	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.9	7.0	7.3	7.7	8.0

Note: Estimate of total is the number of children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year.
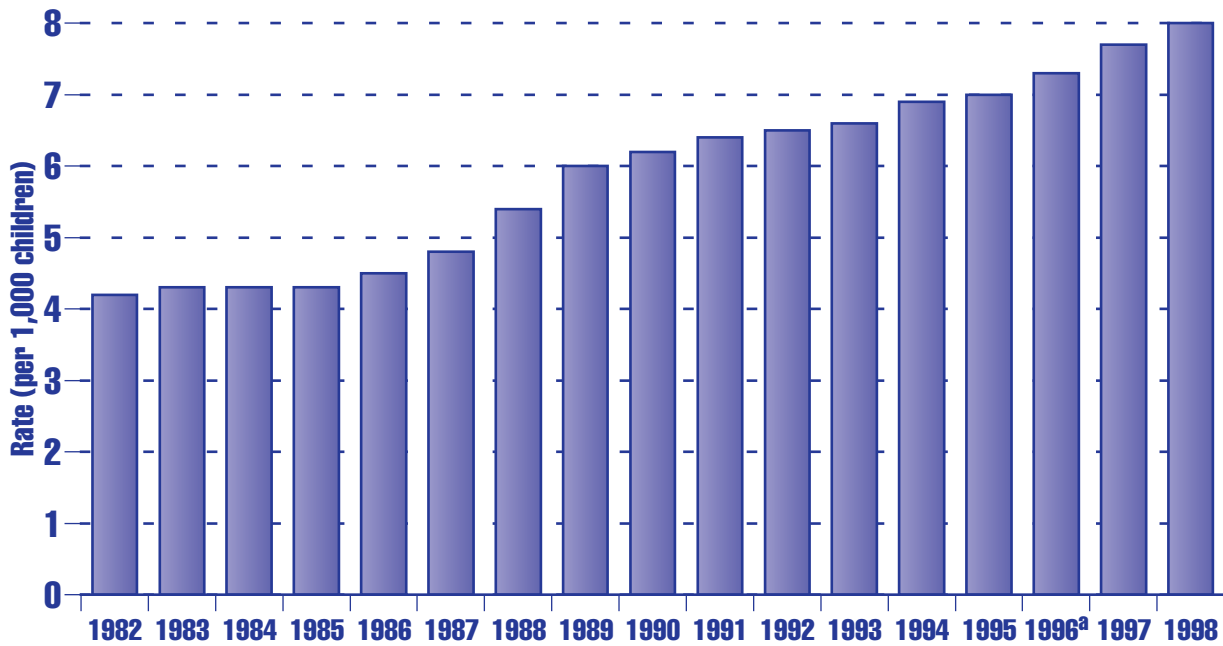
[a] 1996 was the last year in which data on foster care were collected through the Voluntary Cooperative Information System (VCIS). The Administration on Children and Families (ACF) has implemented the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) as a replacement for VCIS. While VCIS was a voluntary reporting system, states are required to participate in AFCARS and must use uniform definitions. Most importantly, AFCARS collects case-level foster care data.   Estimates in this table may not be comparable to estimates provided in previous issues of *Trends in the Well*-Being of America's Children and Youth due to the population estimates provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Sources: Estimate of children in foster care for 1997 and 1998 from special analysis by John Gavdiosi, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, 1999; estimates of children in foster care for years 1982-1996 from Tashio Tatara, 1995, and 1997; population estimates for 1982-1990 from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1996; population estimates for 1990-1998 from Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Table ST-99-9.

[9] For purposes of this report, "foster care" is defined as a living arrangement where a child resides outside his or her own home, under the case management and planning responsibility of a state child welfare agency. These living arrangements include relative and nonrelative foster homes, group homes, child-care facilities, emergency shelter care, supervised independent living, and nonfinalized adoptive homes.

Figure PF 2.3

Children in the United States living in foster care (rate per 1,000 children): 1982-1998

Note: Estimate of total is the number of children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year.

[a] 1996 was the last year in which data on foster care were collected through the Voluntary Cooperative Information System (VCIS). The Administration on Children and Families (ACF) has implemented the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) as a replacement for VCIS. While VCIS was a voluntary reporting system, states are required to participate in AFCARS and must use uniform definitions. Most importantly, AFCARS collects case-level foster care data. Estimates in this table may not be comparable to estimates provided in previous issues of *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth* due to changes in the population estimates provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Sources: Estimate of children in foster care for 1997 and 1998 from special analysis by John Gavdiosi, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, 1999; estimates of children in foster care for years 1982-1996 from Tatara, 1995, and 1997, no. 13; population estimates for 1982-1990 from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1996; population estimates for 1990-1998 from Population Estimates Program.